

Praying Through the Wilderness

Nov. 18, 2018

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: Psalm 139:7-11

(Here is a psalm/song to help your group as you worship.)

Read and meditate as a group on Psalm 139:7-11.

Icebreaker

What would you do more of if there was no TV, radio, computer, or cell phone available?

Text for Discussion: I Kings 19:1-18

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

The realities of life can weigh heavy on our soul, leaving us surrounded by darkness. In these times of deep inner turmoil, we cannot help but wonder: Is the Lord still there? Does He still care? How do we pray in these moments of uncertainty, when we don't even know if God is listening?

What brings our souls to the point where we cry out "**Do you care, Lord?**" For many, it's the crushing realization that our dreams and hopes have become disappointments. A sense of failure sets in. We're left exhausted and unmotivated. Emotionally drained and spiritually ashamed, we dare to ask, "Lord, do you even care?!"

And how does our loving Father respond? With assurance and care. God is in control; He is our good shepherd and the healer of our soul. He offers us rest, to quiet the worries that consume us. We yearn to be in control, but peace will be found in confessing that we are not God. We need to stop asking God's forgiveness that we can't do everything. Instead, we need to ask God's forgiveness that we ever imagined we could. By coming to the end of ourselves, we can learn to embrace our limits, slow down, and be with the Lord.

A storm rages in our soul – a mass of fear and anger and emotional pain – and our Father seeks to heal us. He knows how damaging it is to let these wounds fester. Which is why He wants us to voice our frustrations and burdens in His presence, even if it's bluntly asking, "**Can I trust you, Lord?**" The Lord does no rebuke these moments of raw honesty. God is not afraid of our doubt; He wants us to trust Him enough to tell Him what's really on our heart. Yes, He is the God of power, but He is also the God of stillness and silence, and it is His kindness that leads us out of the darkness.

It's not enough to know that God is there and that He cares... although both are vital. We have to know that **God is for us and will act for our good**, according to His will. Sometimes, all we're really looking for is an immediate fix or answer, but as J.I. Packer wrote, "The Lord is not in such a hurry as we are, and it's not His way to give more light on the future than we need for action in the present."

From our vantage point, it may seem like nothing is happening. So we judge God's faithfulness on daily (or even hourly) circumstances, which make it seem like He isn't listening. But our foundation and trust in prayer is that God is seated on the throne above, which means He is in complete control. He knows what we most need, and it isn't a plan to cope with our emotions. It is to pray to a loving, faithful God who is seated on a throne of Heaven.

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

When was the last time you were overwhelmed by God's love? How did it build your trust or affect your prayer life?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- What is Elijah's perspective on his life in this passage? What unmet expectations did Elijah have?
 - What is his physical and emotional state? How was he responding to it all?
 - What areas of life do you tend to catastrophize when things are difficult or do not turn out as expected? Is it true?
 - In what areas of life are you exhausted? How do you think the Lord wants to provide you with rest?
- Why do you think God asked Elijah the same question twice?(vs. 9,13)
 - What is the Lord inviting you to tell Him all about today?
- Name the ways you see God's tender kindness toward Elijah in this passage.
 - What experiences have you had that were an indication of God's tender kindness toward you?
 - When was the last time you were overwhelmed by God's love? How did it build your trust or affect your prayer life?
- God encouraged Elijah to eat and drink, to believe truth instead of lies, to listen to His voice and to get back to what He had called Him to do? At this season in your life which one do you resonate with and why?
- What encourages you in this passage?

Prayer

Prayer helps us to slow down to catch up with Jesus. Spend time telling God about any constant low-level feelings of guilt, failure, or exhaustion you may be feeling. Express gratitude that He cares, you can trust Him and He will act. Confess that He is God and ask for rest and peace. Pray for those you know who might be struggling with depression, fear, and exhaustion. Listen for His still small voice.

Experiment of the week

(A suggestion for engagement in following the way of Jesus this week)

Pray for opportunities to tell others what you learned about praying in the wilderness this week. Name three people you are praying for and share the names with your CG for accountability and celebration. Get a prayer partner in your CG and commit to pray for their 3 names as well. Share updates with your prayer partner regularly.